

PART II

Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling, glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlement occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Nisqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson Bay Company, which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present state of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capitol in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1851, with a capitol at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound Basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at this time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 624,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,141,990. Two other railroads, the Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe who took up lumbering, fishing, mining and agriculture. Ranked numerically according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (42,000), Swedes (35,000), Norwegians (34,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000) and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

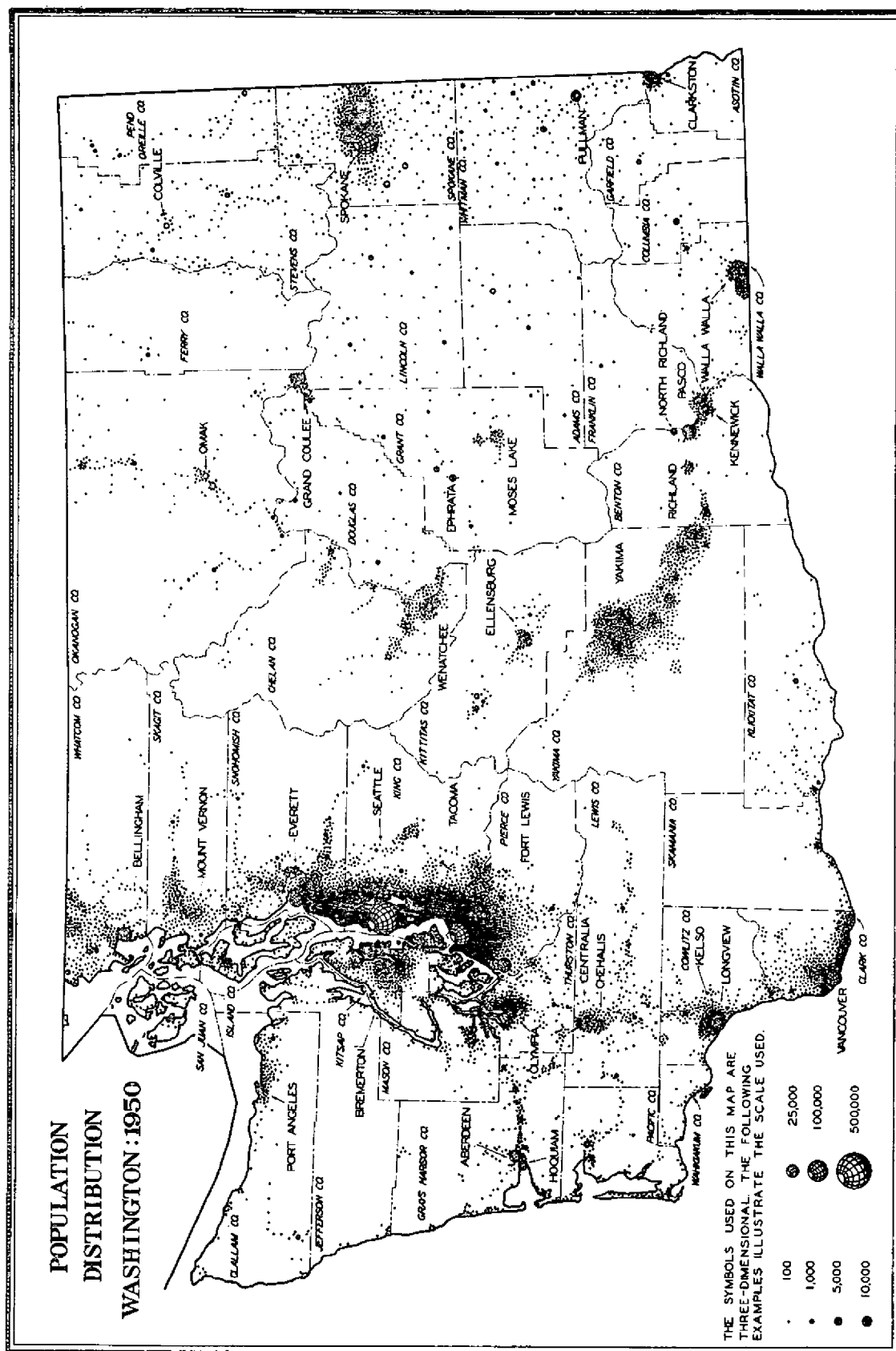
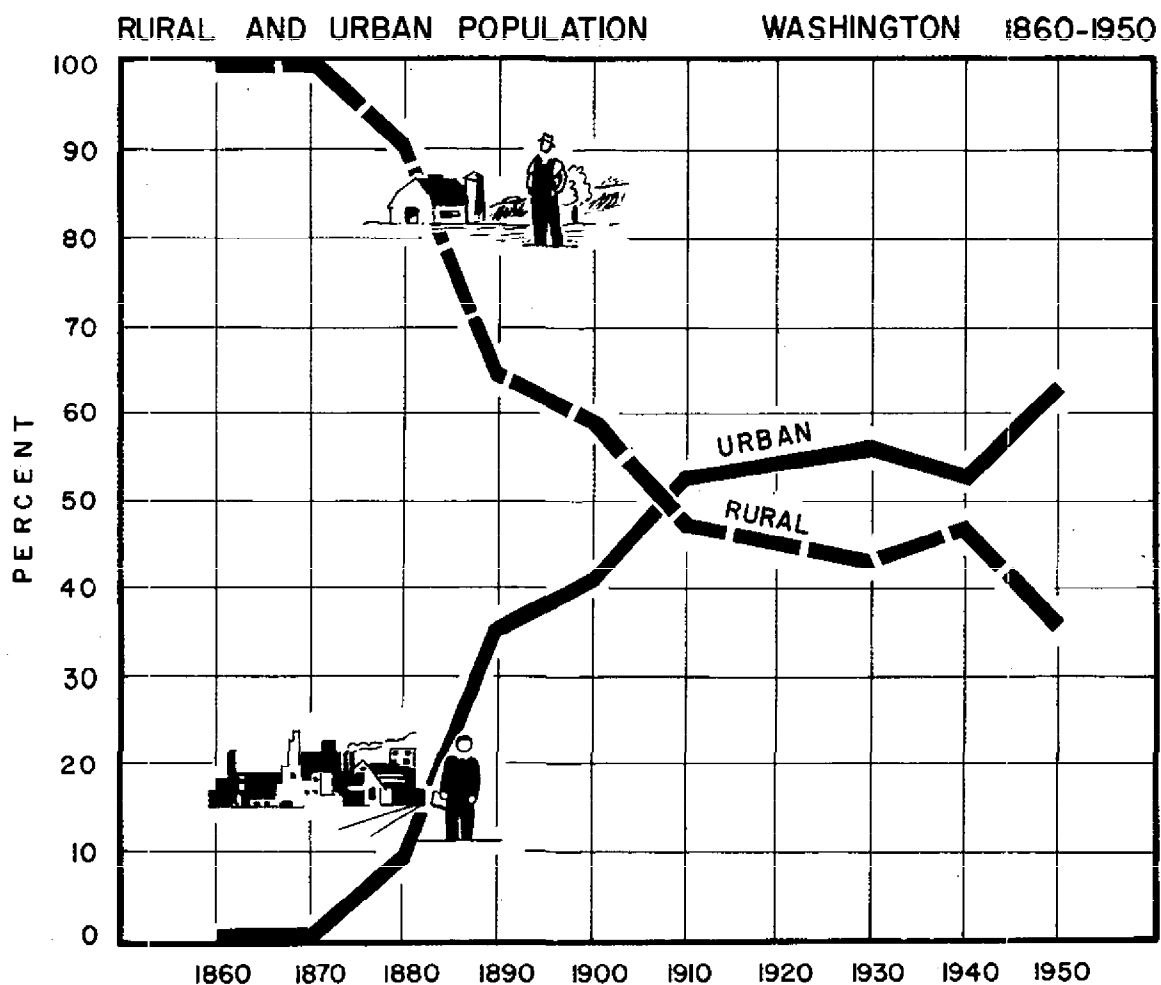
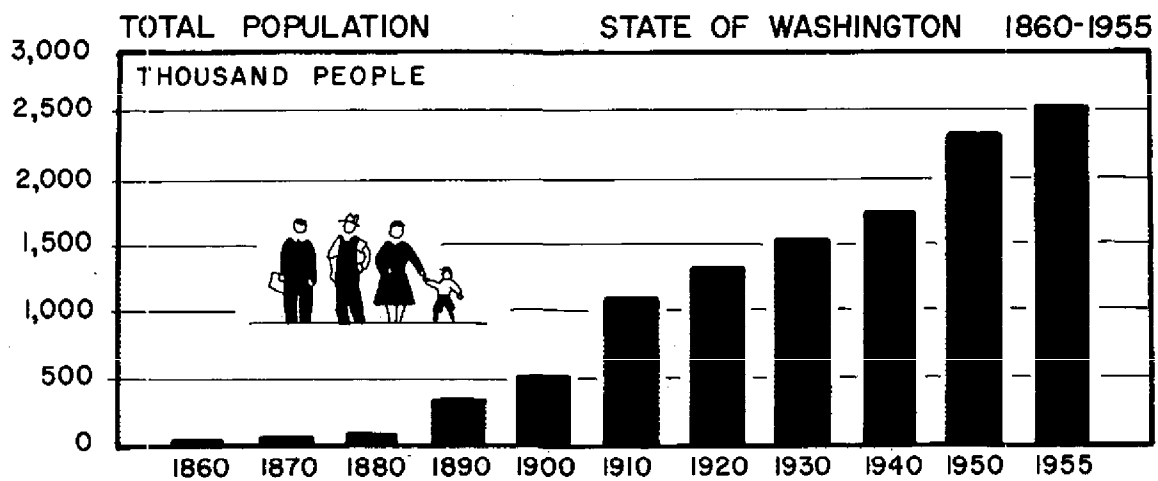


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950; Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955.

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE.

V J K

The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new-defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas--in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.- Population of Washington
1860-1955

Year	Population
1860	11,594
1870	23,955
1880	75,116
1890	357,232
1900	518,103
1910	1,141,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
1950	2,378,963
1955	2,580,000

Sources: U.S. Census, Population;
Washington State Census
Board, April 1, 1955
Estimate.

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (34,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400) and Longview (23,500).

Population of Benton County

Benton County has grown steadily in population since the first Census in 1910. From 1910 to 1950 the population was entirely rural, there being no cities exceeding 2,500 in population, outside the boundaries of the Hanford Atomic Energy Commission Reservation. With the rapid growth of Kennewick and Prosser as well as Richland, the Atomic Energy Commission's city, the population became over 60 percent urban by 1957. In 1950 rural farm population was only 6,053, ranking sixteenth in the state. Only 11 out of each 100 persons in Benton County were living on farms in 1950. Industrialization and urbanization within Benton County and other parts of the state drew many persons away from agriculture. Benton County has registered one of the largest percentage growths in population in the state during the last 15 years.

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771, or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, a about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimates of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

Table 2.- Population of Benton County
1900-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1900 ^{1/}			
1910	7,937	100	0
1920	10,903	100	0
1930	10,952	100	0
1940	12,053	100	0
1950	51,370	40	60
1955	63,600	40	60

^{1/} No Census data; not established as a county until 1905.

Source: U.S. Census, Population

All incorporated places outside the Atomic Reservation have grown in recent federal censuses and state surveys of population. Kennewick, closely adjacent to the Federal Atomic Reservation, grew rapidly from 1940 to 1950 when thousands of families moved to the area for employment in atomic energy. Richland grew to 21,000, becoming the major population center. Kennewick became the second largest city with an estimated 13,550 by 1957. Prosser, an agricultural center and the seat of county government, expanded to 3,125 by 1937. West Richland became a new incorporated place after 1955.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
Benton County, 1910-1957

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1957 ^{1/}
Benton City	--	--	--	--	863	1,140
Kennewick	1,219	1,684	1,519	1,918	10,106	13,550
Prosser	1,298	1,697	1,569	1,719	2,636	3,125
Richland ^{2/}	--	--	--	--	21,809	--
West Richland ^{3/}	--	--	--	--	--	1,550

^{1/} Populations for 1957 are estimates of the Wash. State Census Board, April 1, 1957.

^{2/} Richland is a federal city managed by the Atomic Energy Commission within the boundaries of the Hanford Atomic Works Reservation. It is not incorporated under the laws of Washington State. No published population figures are available except for the 1950 Census.

^{3/} West Richland was incorporated in 1955.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population.
Washington State Census Board.

Benton County has been a melting pot of immigrants from a variety of European nations and Canada. Before 1920 agricultural lands and farming attracted numerous Scandinavian, German, English and Canadian immigrants. In the 1920 Census when agriculture was the main occupation, about one person in 10

was a foreign-born resident. Canada and Germany provided the largest immigrant groups, although Scandinavians from Sweden, Norway and Denmark were collectively larger in number. By 1950 foreign-born made up only about two percent because of the limited European immigrant quotas made effective by the United States in 1924.

Table 4.- Foreign-Born White Population, Benton County
1920 and 1950

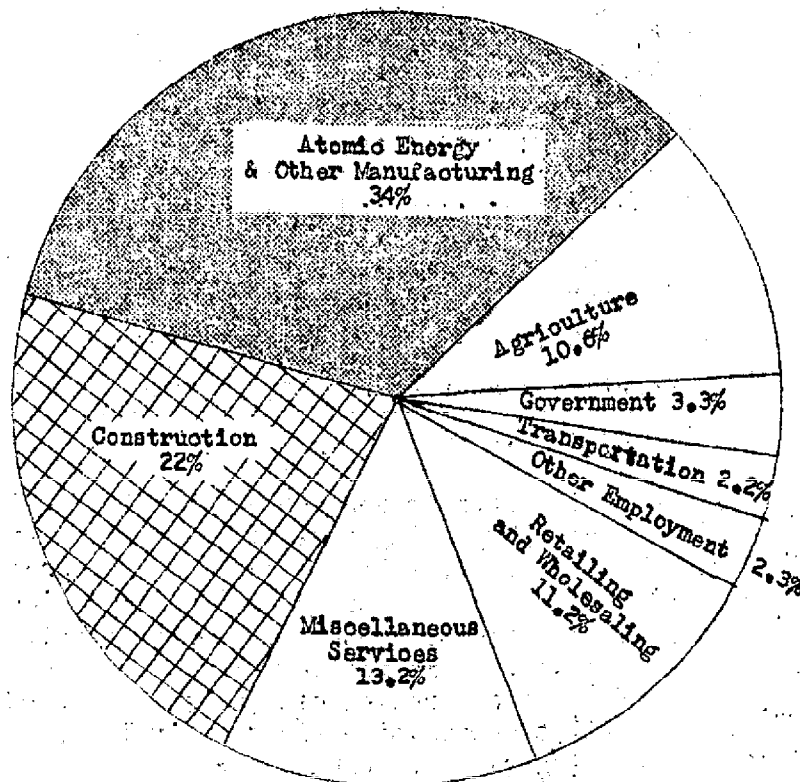
Country of Birth	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	98	105
Scotland.....	43	40
Northern Ireland.....	--	2
Ireland (Eire).....	37	24
Norway.....	119	83
Sweden.....	139	70
Denmark.....	90	49
Netherlands.....	5	21
Switzerland.....	22	--
France.....	14	21
Germany.....	153	90
Poland.....	10	17
Czechoslovakia.....	--	16
Austria.....	15	26
Yugoslavia.....	6	8
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	10	79
Finland.....	19	6
Italy.....	31	45
Canada-French.....	16	29
Canada-Other.....	226	406
All other countries...	78	150
Totals	1,131	1,287
Percent foreign-born	10.3	2.5

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Agriculture ranked only fifth in employment in 1950. This is a recent development occurring since 1940, being a result of the recently established defense industries. Manufacturing, which includes the production of atomic energy materials, leads other occupations by a wide margin accounting for nearly one-third of all gainful employment. Construction, also related principally to federal activity in atomic energy, is the second major source of wages. Service and commercial trades in the fast-growing cities is another recently expanded field of work. In the latest Census of employment in 1950, only 11 percent were self-employed or earning wages in farm work.

Table 5.-- Employment of the Population
Benton County, 1950

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	14,957	4,675	19,632	100.0
Agriculture.....	1,759	335	2,094	10.6
Mining.....	16	—	16	.1
Construction.....	3,944	366	4,310	22.0
Manufacturing.....	5,456	1,250	6,706	34.0
Transportation.....	498	39	537	2.2
Retail and wholesale stores....	1,336	853	2,189	11.2
Miscellaneous services.....	1,137	1,455	2,592	13.2
Public administration (government employment).....	447	201	648	3.3
Other employment.....	363	176	539	2.3

Source: U.S. Census, PopulationFigure 3.-- Agricultural Employment Compared With Other
Employment in Benton County, 1950
(Based on U.S. Census, Population, 1950)